राष्ट्रपति अभिभाषण के माध्यम से इस देवेगौड़ा सरकार ने अथक प्रयत्न किया है पिछड़े क्षेत्रों को आगे बढ़ाने का, अशांति दूर करने के लिए पैकेज प्रोग्राम और विभिन्न कार्यक्रम जैसे गरीबी उन्मूलन, बेरोज़गारी दूर करने का उन्होंने प्रयास किया है । अब आपका आदेश है तो मैं ज्यादा नही बोलना चाहता हूं लेकिन मैं इतना जरूर कहूंगा कि इस देश की तरक्की इस देश की जनता पर निर्भर करती है । देश का समृध्द हो जाना देश की तरक्की नही हो सकता है जब तक इस देश के निवासियों की आर्थिक स्थिति न सुधरे । इस ओर भी इस अभिभाषण द्वारा इस सरकार ने प्रयत्न किया है । अब मैं ज्यादा न कह कर इस देश की सुरक्षा और शांति के लिए देश को आगे बढ़ाने का जो प्रयत्न राष्ट्रपति जी के अभिभाषण में इस सरकार ने किया है, इसके लिए मैं इसका समर्थन करता हूं । आपने मुझे समय दिया, बहुत-बहुत धन्यवाद ।

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्री त्रिलोकी नाथ चतुर्वेदी) : बहुत-बहुत धन्यवाद जगदम्बी मंडल जी ।

I think the hon. Members are aware that the External Affairs Minister would be with us at any moment from now. He would clarify the points to be raised on the statement made by him on the 26th February. In the meanwhile, we would continue with the debate on the President's Address. Shri Ish Dutt Yadav. He is not here. Shri M.A. Baby has made a request that he would speak tomorrow. Shri Joy Nadukkara.

SHRI JOY NADUKKARA (Kerala): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, at least this Government can be proud of one thing. The United Front Govemment has contributed two new words to the political vocabulary of our country. One is the Common Minimum Programme. In my State....

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI): Mr. Nadukkara, the External Affairs Minister is here, you can resume your speech on the President's Address after the Minister's clarifications.

CLARIFICATIONS ON STATEMENT BY MINISTER

Tripartite Agreement between India, Iran and Turkmenistan

SHRI JOHN F. FERNANDES (Goa): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, I think we have to be bold enough to compliment our hon. Minister of External Affairs because we have signed the tripartite agreement despite the U.S. factor. Sir, Iran is a country which has been blacklisted by the United States of America and other countries are told not to be friendly with that country. In spite of that, I think the Govemment of India is to be complimented because we have shown courage and sagacity to go and sign an agreement with the Govemment of Iran. I think it is a diplomatic coupe the hon. Minister has staged and we have to compliment him and we have to welcome the agreement. Sir, signing of an agreement with Turkmenistan is of paramount importance to our country because it is well-known that Turkmenistan has 30 per cent gas reserves of the world and they have 13 per cent oil reserves of the world and India, everybody knows, have the natural resources. Now, the hon. Minister has not clarified in the statement as to what type of trade will be carried on with that country. I would like to know whether the Khyber Pass would be opened— the Asian silk route with India— with Turkmenistan or whether we will get this gas and the natural oil through pipeline. I think the agreement that we had signed with the Govemment of Oman would not see the light of the day as far as submarine pipeline is concerned. I would request the hon. Minister to clarify as to how, if at all we have any agreement with Turkmenistan, this will be transported to our country, whether submarine pipeline will be used via Iran to India or whether it will cross the international water boundaries of Pakistan. Last time, when the hon. Minister was the External Affairs Minister in V.P. Singh's Government, we had seen the irritant we had with Iran and the hon. Minister even had to cancel a visit because the Islamic card was used against us. There was an interference by our neighbour, Pakistan, which is inimical to us. Now we have seen how that very country has changed and their President had paid a visit to our country two years back. This initiative was taken in 1994 during the Prime Ministership of Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao. So, I compliment the Minister for taking the initiative which we had taken earlier to reach a settlement. I feel the hon. Minister will clarify this position. I have mentioned the U.S. factor. The U.S. factor says to the developing countries not to have trade links, not to have friendly relations with

Iran. But we have seen, at the same time, that there are certain European Super-powers—Italy, Germany and France—who have a lot of trade dealings with Iran. After signing the agreement, we have also seen certain reaction in Delhi. The U.S. Ambassador, Frank Wisner, who had been hailing the Simla Agreement and who had gone to Kashmir and hailed the Simla Agreement...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI): But we are seeking clarifications.

SHRI JOHN F. FERNANDES: Sir, I am talking about the U.S. factor and I request the hon. Minister to react to it. He had made a statement that the Simla Agreement has no relevance now. This is what I am saying of the U.S. facton Whenever we go and sign agreements with countries and we have some rapport with other countries which are not liked by the United States of America, the same reaction comes from them. The very same Ambassador who had been praising the Simla Agreement, last week, made a statement that the Simla Agreement had no relevance. I would like to know from the hon. Minister as to what is the reaction of the Govemment of India fo that. I will be glad if he clarifies the queries raised about transportation.

I would like to know whether we have signed any MoUs with that country *vis-a-vis* transportation of natural gas to this country.

Thank you.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI): Thank you, Mr. Fernandes. Dr. Biplab Dasgupta. He is not here. Mr. M.A. Baby. He is not there. Mr. Meena. He is not here. Mr. Joy Nadukkara. It seems you have the floor always.

SHRI JOY NADUKKARA (Kerala): Thank you, Sir. I congratulate the hon. Minister for signing the agreement with Iran and Turkmenistan. It may be a stepping stone to improving our relationship with other countries. In this changing scenario of international relationship, developing countries like India should come together and evolve strategies for growth and prosperity; otherwise, they will always be forced to beg for the mercy of rich countries, especially in the context of the GATT agreement. I don't want to accuse anybody. In the past we failed to get much support from other countries. Our failure to get a birth in the Security Council shows that. We have to change the pious attitude and plan in advance. This agreement with Iran and Turkmenistan can be a step further towards that end. I may suggest that we should pioneer or take the initiative to form an organisation of developing Asian countries including Russia, may be, an Asian Economic Community, so that we can get a bit more share from, or bargaining power against, other rich countries in future. So, I want a clarification from the Minister whether he will take the initiative to form an Asian Economic Community in the light of the success we have achieved in our relations with these nations.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI): I think there is no other Member to seek clarifications. I will now request the Minister to reply.

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL): Sir, may I first of all heartily thank my hon. colleagues who have taken a positive view of the efforts we are making to give new light to our foreign policy? It is an established fact and an established tradition of Indian foreign policy, not only now but in Nehru's days also, to attach always a great deal of importance to our relationship with our neighbours and also to our relationship with all other developing countries. If I may go back to the 1947 Asia Conference, Nehru made a historic speech there and he really appreciated it and urged the world to understand that those countries which had the experience of colonial rule had to get together, then only their efforts could succeed in finding a place under the sun. It was that effort which ultimately resulted in the formation of what is called "the Non-Alignment Movement." That Non-Alignment Movement has now, sometimes, been questioned because there is an odd view taken by some people, I think more in ignorance than otherwise, that the Non-Alignment was a response, an Indian view, to the groups or camps or alignments made at that time. The Non-Alignment Movement was not a response to camps. It was not an alignment or like the

Atlantic Treaty or the Warsaw Treaty. Basically, it was an expression of those countries who had the misfortune of being ruled for centuries by the colonial powers to get together and assert their interests. It was called "autonomy of choice". The word "non-alignment' was used much later by the genius, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Krishna Menon. We are celebrating his birth centenary this year. In the first two years when we were spelling that we did not belong to any camp the word was not coined. Gradually the word came to be there. We are meeting in Delhi next month. The Foreign Ministers of 110 non-aligned countries will informally assemble here in the first week of April to see how much journey we covered in the past and how much journey we want to cover in the next century.

This, I think, is a collective vision that we want to take of the future that is coming. In this particular case, Sir, the agreement between India, Iran and Turkmenistan meets our needs. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Central Asian countries, with whom we have very good relations, a long history also, I think, since the days of Aryan migration and coming up to the Soviet days, every time and every phase of the Indian history has seen the relevance of our relations with all these countries which are now called Central Asian countries. Central Asia, etc. may be new words coined, but I think all the history, all our legends, all our folklores, often talk of Tashkent, talk of Bukhara and talk of those things with which we always have a relationship. I cannot recall any phase in history when Central Asia did not matter for us. Yes, there were a few years of colonial rule when an effort was made to draw a curtain between India and its neighbours. Our near neighbours became our strangers. We were made to look more towards Europe than towards our near neighbours. Fortunately, soon after our freedom we got back our equanimity and started looking at our neighbours in a more positive fashion. In this context, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, our trade relations with the Central Asian countries have been facing a difficulty. We have to reach now, say, Tashkent via Odessa. When you go through Black Sea, through Odessa, a very long journey, naturally it affects your trade. In the first phase of our relationship we have now established a new trade route called "silk route". You can call it a new silk route, if you so choose. Now it is easier for Indian goods to sail from Bombay to Barbados and then by train all through Iran right up to Turkmenistan and get into the Central Asia railway system and get to any destination in Central Asia. Not only to Central Asia; the journey up to Ukarine also has been reduced by two weeks.

Therefore, this is a new opening, both in the historical context and in today's context. After all, trade is not only selling and buying of goods; it is also an expression of political relationship. It also expresses cultural relationship. Therefore, a new type of avenue opens for India. Now we are planning that we should build another railway route of about 7,200 kilometres in Iran so that all the goods do not have to go via Tehran. There can be a short-cut and the journey can be reduced by another week or so. This trade route is now of great importance for us. We were visualising it in the past also. I remember when I was the Ambassador in Moscow, one day the then Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union asked me, "Why don't you form a three-country agreement"? At that time naturally,. Turkmenistan was a part of the Soviet Union. So he suggested that Iran, Soviet Union and India should form a joint company. But politics was such, it was not possible. Now it is possible. When I was signing this agreement, I was thinking of what I was told in Moscow at that time. This is a natural trade route for India which has now been opened. My friend has mentioned that some country is not looking at Iran positively, etc. We do not go by rules book. We do not let anybody else decide as to what our relationship with other countries should be. Iran is our neighbour. We have a long history of cooperation with Iran. Again I would come to the tradition, the culture and the language. We see Persian language as a common language there also. We also have a long history of Mughals and others who brought here the Iranian tradition, the Iranian language and the Iranian culture. We have interacted. There was a time, I think, about four or five centuries, when there was Buddhism in this area. Buddhist tradition was there. Now, of course, there is Islam, so have we Islam in this country also. Therefore, that is also a commonality of

feature. During my last visit to Iran I was very happy to notice — some incident was mentioned here when I was a Minister last time —Iran's understanding of India's role. I am not being egoistic nor am I trying to inflate our claim to any fame. I only say this thing that India is a powerful country. India has a large market. Everybody wants to reach this market. We have to be careful that others do not exploit us, that they do not dictate to us. Therefore, at the moment, whenever we are forming new relationships or signing agreements, we are keeping this basic thing in mind which Nehru called 'autonomy of choice'. 'Autonomy of choice' is the basic policy of India. That is the policy on which we try to assert our rights whenever we have to. I do not think it is fair on the part of those who have blocked the route to Iran. A single country enforcing blockades is something which is dangerous for world peace. All the same we are not influenced by these things. Although one country has chosen to blockade them and boycott them, most of Europe is trading with them. Their oil is being sold to Europe. Therefore, that relationship is there.

I have also been asked to explain about gas. The position is that those who are experts in this area, tell me that by the middle of the next century, most of the petroleum resources would have exhausted and the world would depend more and more on gas. It so happens that approximately 40 per cent of the total known reserves of gas are in Central Asia and Iran. This gas is available and we are the neamest consumers. Naturally, the sellers of gas are also looking for potential buyers and when I say potential buyers, it does not mean only those countries which want to consume but also the countries which have the capacity to pay. They were naming one or two countries which I do not want to repeat here. They said that they were the best buyers. But they do not have the money to pay. They are not looking for those customers who consume gas without paying for it. India has both. We have the capacity to pay and we have the capacity to consume because India is a growing country and thanks to our economic growth. This again is a continuous process. I do not claim that India has become great only in these last six months since we came here. India's greatness and passage to geratness and India's growing economy has been the outcome of the work done in the last 50 years. We must take pride in it. Because of the sheer capacity of India, we need to have a consensus on foreign policy. Now the gas pipleline issue has come. Iran is keen and Turkmenistan is also keen on it. But there are difficulties in the way. But no political situation is permanent. Things will change. The moment our relations with Pakistan improve as they must, then it will be much easier to get the shortest route. Otherwise, longer routes and more expensive routes will have to be looked for. When you choose the land route and compare it with marine route, land route is more economical and land route is shorter. But if you must go by marine route, then that option is also being examined. We also have an agreement with Oman. We are signing agreements with all these countries because this paves the way for industrial growth. My colleague, the Minister for Planning will be able to tell you more on this. More and more gas will be needed. Natural gas is the best source of energy. It is cleaner and it is non-polluting and it also reaches the consumer directly. We are also examining another option with Iran and also with Turkmenistan. That option is, pending this pipeline link, we should be able to think in terms of liquefied gas. After all, the pipeline gas will take time to reach everywhere. But ships can bring it more easily. That agreement is also being pursued, perhaps, we will be able to arrive at it soon. I intend going to Turkmenistan in the near future. When the President of Turkmenistan came here, he offered us this suggestion. He said, "Let us do this as well." I am talking of the future. This is the future of an industrialised India. This is the future of a country which has the potential for growth. This is where all these friendships are going to be economical. I was asked some time back, "What is the first priority in your foreign policy?"

The first priority in the agenda of today's foreign policy of every nation is economic and this is the policy of India also. When we talk of economic, gas does come in and that is where it is important for us to have these agreements also. I am sure, to sum up, this agreement which

opens a new route for our trade will not only be an answerable trade but will strengthen our friendship with all regions, will open a new area of cultural cooperation as well. Thank You.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI): Hon. Members, we have to take up the special Mentions. The debate on the President's Address will continue tomorrow.

SPECIAL MENTIONS Tabling of an early-day motion in the house of Commons by British Labour M.P.s on Kashmir

SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA (Bihar): Sir, mine was listed in the Zero Hour Submissions, but never mind. I am fortunate enough that the External Affairs Minister is also here. I would like to bring to the notice of the House one very important issue. Only recently three Labour Party Members of Parliament have tabled an Early-Day Motion in the House of Commons and the Motion is that the people of Kashmir must be allowed to express their aspirations for the political and Constitutional status of their homeland. We also know that recently the Prime Minister of England visited Pakistan. He also made some comments about Kashmir. These labour M.P.s have also said that the last Assembly Elections in kashmir were deeply flawed. That was the word they used. Now, this is a very highly objectionable matter. India is a sovereign country and an independent nation in the family of nations. We are a Member of the United Nations and various other international bodies. Nobody has the right to challenge our national integrity or anything that goes on within our boundaries. Regarding Kashmir issue, our Prime Minister has said that he is ready to discuss the issue according to Simla Agreement. Kashmir issue is not at all negotiable and that is final and the democratic process has been revived there. A democratically elected Government has been installed there. So this is an issue which should be taken into account by the External Affairs Minister and adequate steps should be taken to see that in future no such irresponsible utterances are made or motions tabled by anybody outside our periphery, wherever it may be. If it is necessary, we should also consider severing our relationship with the Commonwealth; we are no longer under their domain, we are a free nation. Thank you.

SHRI JOHN F. FERNANDES (Goa): I have raised a matter of international importance. The hon. Minister did not reply to it.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI): He did reply.

SHRI JOHN F. FERNANDES: The Statement of Ambassador Frank Wisner about Kashmir.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI TRILOKINATH CHATURVEDI): No, he did reply to that. That India is not going to be influenced by others' perception. But, anyway, the hon Minister is still here.

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL): Sir, I have taken note of the very valid and relevant protests by my collegues. Unfortunately, some nations have not yet learnt that the colonial era ended 50 years ago. They still live in that world and they still think that they have some pact arrangement with them and tell other nations what they should do. We have never passed a resolution about freedom for Scotland. We have never passed a resolution about Ireland. I think this is in the good dimensions. Therefore, I am really not able to understand why these friends, be it in any party in U.K., think that from time to time they can interfere in our internal affairs. I think it is myopic. I think we should sympathise with their myopia. If India can help, we will try'to get them duly operationalised. The difficulty basically is, I think they are now in the midst of elections. Elections are going to be held in the month of May in U.K. Probably, in those elections they are now trying to look at the constituency, as to who would vote for them and how. I think it will be well-advised and if the Labour Party and the leaders are thinking of getting into power, then it is good for them to look at their home and also future relations and the quality of relationship they want to have with us. I do not want to use harsh words but I can also say with firmness and strength that India's affairs will be settled by Indians and, therefore, India has both the strength and the will to safeguard its interests.